

IN SENATE
OF
THE UNITED STATES,

JANUARY 12, 1818.

The Committee on the Public Lands, to whom was referred the petition of the trustees for the Vincennes university,

REPORT:

That by an act of Congress, passed on the 26th of March, 1804, "for the disposal of the public lands in the Indiana territory," an entire township of six miles square, was reserved in the district of Vincennes "for the use of a seminary of learning;" and that by an act of the legislature of the Indiana territory, passed on the 29th of November, 1806, for establishing a university at Vincennes, the trustees appointed for the seminary were authorized to sell four thousand acres of the said township for the purpose of putting the institution into immediate operation. The proceeds of this sale were applied to the erection of a building, suitable for a public school. The trustees were also authorized to rent out or lease the remaining part of the township, for the use of the said university. It appears, however, that from causes incidental to a new country where the price of land is low, and the quantity for settlement, disproportioned to the population, that the trustees have not been able to make any advantageous disposition of the lands by granting leases; nor to derive effective resource from rents for the support of the seminary, and that the unfavorable prospect of their unproductiveness, for years to come, when disposed of in that way, has induced the trustees for the present, to abandon the measure.

But in order to derive from these lands an active fund, for rendering the institution respectable, and immediately advantageous to the country, the trustees have by their petition, recommended to Congress, the propriety of authorizing the sale of the lands, and vesting the proceeds of the sale in the stock of such bank or banks as may be designated for the purpose, and of vesting the dividends arising in the trustees for the use of the Vincennes university.

The committee cannot doubt that the sale of the lands and investment of the proceeds in the manner proposed, would produce immediate aid, and for several years to come, a more effective fund for the support of the institution, than what can be derived from the lands when let on rent, or by lease; nor would they express an opinion that it would be improper when these lands shall have acquired their real value from the increase of population, and advanced im-

provement on the adjacent county to dispose of them in the manner proposed by the trustees.

Indeed several considerations would appear to recommend the eventual adoption of such a measure. A monied capital, as it is the most manageable fund, must have a preference for the endowment of a seminary over that of rents drawn from land, which is too precarious in its nature, to be depended on for the purpose.

It is also a consideration of some importance, in a political point of view, whether the reservation of title in government, to such considerable tracts of lands, to be let on rent, by the agents of a corporation, and to be settled and cultivated by tenants, in some measure dependent on these agents, would, in practice operate to the advantage of civil liberty. To assure the agricultural class of the community the independant and free exercise of the privileges of citizens, it is necessary they should hold in absolute right the soil which they cultivate. But on a view of the whole case, it would appear to the committee, that to authorize a sale of the lands at present, before they have acquired their proper value, would be to sacrifice to present advantage the futue prospects of the institution. It is worthy of inquiry, whether the object in view would justify the sacrifice, or indeed whether it be at all attainable at present. The object is to render the iustitution immediately "respectable and advantageous." Did this depend alone on the appropriation of funds, it might, in some measure, be realized; but it is conceived that all establishments of the kind. foermed for the higher branches of literature, must depend for their advances and maturity, on the progress of society, the state of common schools for preparatory education, and the population, wealth, and state of improvement in the country in which they are situated. And it is not probable that in a country so recently settled, the means would be afforded to keep in respectable standing, an institution such as is contemplated even after, by an anticipation of its fund, it had been forced in a premature existence. The following resolution is respectfully submitted:

Resolved, That the petitioners have leave to withdraw their petition.